Stay in Control When Late Night Hunger Strikes

Last time, we talked about environmental triggers. In today's lesson, you'll learn techniques to cope with late night hunger.

Do you stick to your diet all day long but struggle with late night cravings? Find out more about why it is that *when* you eat matters almost as much as *what* you eat. You may be able to enjoy more of the foods you love and still lose weight with these easy lifestyle adjustments.

Changing the Way You Eat

1. **Get familiar with the latest research.** There have been many studies over the years about whether calories consumed at night are more likely to make you fat**. The general consensus is that it's best to eat when you are the most active.** You may have heard that Oprah avoids eating after 7:30 p.m. Resolve to stop eating a couple of hours before bedtime.

2. **Start with a healthy breakfast.** Breakfast really is the most important meal of the day. Your body needs to refuel. Plus, you'll be likely to eat less for the rest of the day if you begin with a full stomach. Make a bean burrito or drink a yogurt shake with a slice of whole wheat toast.

3. **Eat more frequently.** Every four to six hours is a good time for a meal or a snack. This schedule will keep your metabolism up and help prevent you from overeating at night because you arrive home from work starving.

4. **Choose healthy snacks.** If you do eat at night, choose your snacks wisely. Vegetables, fruits, nuts, and whole grains are all better than processed foods high in sugar and fat and low in nutritional value.

5. **Consume more fiber. Fiber is ideal for keeping you feeling satiated while eating less.** This ingredient is why a plate of steamed broccoli sprinkled with a little garlic or vinegar leaves you feeling more content than a cookie that contains more calories.

6. **Limit your portions.** There is still room for your favorites like ice cream or brownies. Just measure out a sensible portion so you get the flavor without

adding to your waistline.

7. **Drink water or tea.** Beverages without any calories give you the experience of snacking without interfering with your diet. Sip water anytime and enjoy a cup of decaffeinated tea in the evening.

Other Lifestyle Adjustments

1. **Enhance your sleep. It's easy to ignore the refrigerator if you're sound asleep.** Keep a regular schedule, buy a good mattress, and block out distracting lights and sounds.

2. **Wake up early. Early risers tend to weigh less than night owls even if they eat the same amount.** Try going to bed and rising an hour earlier. You'll naturally eat less at night.

3. **Brush your teeth.** Once you brush and floss, you may decide it's too much trouble to clean your teeth again so you'll pass on the cheesecake. You'll also keep your teeth and gums healthy.

4. **Turn off the TV.** A sedentary lifestyle plays a big role in weight gain. **Go for a walk or visit the gym after work instead of munching while you watch TV or surf the Internet.**

5. **Reward yourself with non-food treats.** Substitute a warm bath or a good book in place of your usual bag of chips and soda. Your new rituals will soon become a habit.

6. **Keep a journal.** If you need help changing your ways, writing your activities down may help. It will remind you of how many calories you really consume at night.

Get plenty of restful sleep and eat sensibly all day, starting with a nutritious breakfast. You'll be better prepared to ward off late night hunger and reach your weight goals while giving your body enough calories to feel full and energetic.

The trigger in the next lesson might surprise you. What do you do if you hate to cook? For some, this aversion triggers running out to a restaurant, sailing through a fast food drive-thru, or ordering take-out for almost every meal. Learn to cut calories even if you hate to cook.

Here's what you need to do today:

Tonight, go to bed an hour earlier than usual. Tomorrow, get up an hour earlier, eat breakfast, and then have a healthy meal or snack every few hours. Go to bed at the earlier time again tomorrow night. Try this schedule for a few days and you'll find that your cravings for late-night food lessen.

If an hour feels too extreme for you, ease into it with 15-minute increments. For example, tonight go to bed only 15 minutes earlier than usual. Tomorrow, get up only 15 minutes earlier. Get used to this schedule and then change your schedule by another 15 minutes. Follow this process until you've made the 1-hour change from your starting time.